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ANTIALIASING METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR VIDEO APPLICATIONS

Inventors:

Mika Tuomi
Sami Santeri Tammilehto
Petri Olavi Nordlund

002777 6887250

Please send all correspondence to:

Gregory M. Howison
P.O. Box 741715
Dallas, Texas 75374-1715
(972) 479-0462

Express Mail No. EL655492575US

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PATENT

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**ANTIALIASING METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR VIDEO
APPLICATIONS**

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention pertains in general to computer graphics, and more particularly, to antialiasing of edge pixels in a rendered graphic.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In computer graphics, images are formed by selectively combining a plurality of polygons into a final image that can be displayed on a display output pixel grid. The polygons are received from input data file and then rasterized into the pixel grid to determine the properties of each pixel in the pixel grid. When a given polygon, a triangle for discussion purposes, is rendered, a determination must be made as to whether a given pixel lies within the boundaries of the triangle. If the pixel is completely contained in the boundary of the triangle, then the color of the triangle will be the color of the pixel. Whenever a pixel lies on an edge of the triangle, or the triangle edge passes therethrough, a decision must be made as to whether the pixel is to be the color of the triangle or the color of the background. The decision is typically based upon a fixed point within the pixel, that being the center point or one of the edge points. Typically, the top left corner vertex of the triangle is utilized as the sampling point. Therefore, if the top left corner (TLC) is within the triangle, then the pixel will be rendered with the color of the triangle. If, however, it is outside of the triangle, no matter how close the TLC is to the triangle edge, then it will be rendered in the background color. The result of this decision making process is a "jagged" edge, referred to as a "jaggie." The reason that these jaggies exist is that the image must be quantized or rasterized to discrete memory locations, such as within a frame buffer, which correspond to the pixel locations in the pixel grid. These jaggies therefore constitute visual artifacts of the images when displayed. This limited resolution is referred to as "aliasing," because visual artifacts are created by differences in the spatial frequency characteristics of the display and the spatial frequency characteristics of the viewer's eyes. Techniques for removing or reducing artifacts by smoothing the appearance of the jaggies and/or increasing the spatial frequency characteristics of the display are known as "antialiasing" techniques.

One function of antialiasing is that referred to as "supersampling."

Supersampling is a technique that requires a plurality of samples of the polygon to be

taken within the pixel boundaries and then a determination made as to what percentage of these pixels are within the triangle and what percentage are outside of the triangle such that an averaging operation can then be performed as to the color. For example, if the supersampling determines that 80% of the pixel is within the triangle and 20% is outside of the triangle, and that the triangle is green and the background boundary outside the triangle is red, then a "blend" can then be made between the color of the triangle and the background color such that a blend of 80% green and 20% red can be made. This gives a "blurring" effect to the edge of the triangle.

10 The manner in which this supersampling is carried out is to divide the pixel into "subpixels" and then determine if the TLC of each of the subpixels is inside or outside the triangle. If, for example, the pixel is divided into a 2x2 array with four pixels, and three pixels are determined to have the TLC within the triangle and one pixel determined to have the TLC outside of the triangle, then 75% of the triangle color would be blended with the background color to actually generate this pixel by the video display processing portion of the computer graphics system. However, in order to achieve this supersampling, information regarding the values of the subpixels must be stored in the frame buffer. In the 2x2 example, this would require the color for each of the subpixels to be stored which would result in a frame buffer having a requirement for four times the memory. If an 8-bit value is required for the color value of the pixel, then four 8-bit values would be required for a given pixel. This situation is exacerbated when there are a number of color planes involved with each color having a value from "0" to "256."

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention disclosed and claimed herein, in one aspect thereof, comprises a method for antialiasing a video graphic. First, the processor renders the pixels and, during the step of rendering, determines if an edge pixel of a polygon is being rendered. If so, a sample point is defined within each pixel and a determination made if the sample point lies within the polygon or outside of the polygon. If the sample point lies within the polygon, the color of the edge pixel is set to the color of the polygon. If the sample point lies outside of the polygon, the color of the edge pixel is set to the color of the background. The percentage of the pixel that lies in the space associated with the sampling point is then calculated. The color of the pixel is stored in a frame buffer in association with the percent value that lies in the space associated with the sample point and in association with an indication that the sample point lies within the polygon or outside of the polygon. In a video processing step, the pixel information associated with a pixel to be output is fetched. For an edge pixel, determining if the color associated with the pixel is associated with the background or with the color of the polygon from the color indication associated with the pixel. If the pixel color is that of the polygon, the color of the pixel is blended with the color of a neighboring pixel outside of the polygon in a percentage defined by the stored percentage such that the percentage of the stored color is equal to the stored percentage value and the percentage blended from the neighboring pixel is that associated with the percent of the pixel having been determined to lie outside of the polygon. If the pixel is the color of the background, the color of the pixel is blended with the color of a neighboring pixel in the polygon in a percentage that equals the color of the pixels multiplied by the percentage lying outside of the polygon and the color of the polygon multiplied by the neighboring pixel or polygon multiplied by the percentage of the pixel lying within the polygon.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings in which:

5 FIGURES 1a and 1b illustrate diagrammatic views of the prior art system, illustrating a difference between normal sampling and supersampling;

FIGURE 2 illustrates an expanded diagrammatic view of a single pixel for a prior art supersampling technique;

10 FIGURE 3 illustrates a block diagram of the graphics computer for rendering the graphics;

FIGURE 4 illustrates a diagrammatic view of each of the pixels and their vector representation in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIGURE 5 illustrates an expanded diagrammatic view of four pixels and one associated edge pixel;

15 FIGURE 6 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the technique for determining the vector value;

FIGURE 7 illustrates an alternate embodiment to the embodiment of FIGURE 6;

20 FIGURE 8 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the technique for determining the vector value;

FIGURE 9 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the directional aspects of the vector;

FIGURE 10 illustrates a flow chart depicting the rendering operation;

25 FIGURE 11 illustrates a flow chart illustrating the video display process operation;

FIGURE 12 illustrates a diagrammatic view illustrating a selection of blending with the neighboring pixel;

FIGURE 13 illustrates a diagrammatic view for blending with multiple neighboring pixels;

30 FIGURE 14 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the layout of the frame buffer.

FIGURE 15 illustrates a diagrammatic view of an alternate embodiment;
FIGURE 16, 17 and 18 illustrate further embodiments of the embodiment of
FIGURE 15;

FIGURE 19 illustrates the memory layout for the various buffers;

5 FIGURE 20 illustrates an overall diagrammatic view of the rendering engine
and the interface to the memory;

FIGURE 21 illustrates a diagrammatic view for generating the depth of a
particular antialiasing mask;

10 FIGURE 22 illustrates a diagrammatic view illustrating the overwriting
operation for the antialiasing mask;

FIGURE 23 illustrates a flow chart for the operation of generating and
overwriting the antialiasing mask;

FIGURE 24 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the antialiasing mask buffer;

15 FIGURE 25 illustrates a flow chart for the operation of rendering the pixels
and then filtering the rendered video information for the rendered data with the
antialiasing information;

FIGURE 26 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the filtering process;

FIGURE 27 and FIGURE 28 illustrate diagrams of setting the values of the
antialiasing ;

20 FIGURE 29 illustrates a diagrammatic view of the blending operation for a
given pixel;

FIGURE 30 illustrates the rasterizer mask for a sparse sampled sub pixel grid
embodiment;

FIGURE 31 illustrates the final antialiasing mask with overlapping pixels;

25 FIGURE 32 illustrates the filter kernel for blending with a given pixel;

FIGURES 33a-33d illustrate the weighting operation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to FIGURES 1a and 1b, there are illustrated diagrammatic views for a prior art graphics processing system utilizing supersampling. In FIGURE 1a, there are illustrated four pixels 102, 104, 106 and 108. There is also illustrated a triangle 110, which triangle 110 has an edge 112 that passes through the grid of pixels 102-108, it being understood that many more pixels would be associated with the grid and adjacent to the pixels 102 and 108. The edge 112 passes through pixel 102 and pixel 106, with pixel 104 and pixel 108 being fully contained within the triangle 110. In a conventional rasterizing operation, the decision will be made as to whether the pixel was within the triangle or outside the triangle. This decision is based upon a point somewhere in the given pixel within the triangle or outside of the triangle. This point is typically selected as the top left corner (TLC) of the pixel. Pixel 102 has a TLC 114, pixel 104 has a TLC 116, pixel 106 has a TLC 118 and pixel 108 has a TLC 120. It can be seen from FIGURE 1a that pixel 102 has its associated TLC 114 outside of triangle 110 and pixel 106 has its associated TLC 118 outside of triangle 110. Therefore, both pixel 102 and pixel 106 would have a color associated therewith rasterized and set to equal background color whereas pixels 104 and 108 having their associated TLC's 116 and 120 within the triangle 110 set to the color of the triangle 110. When the video display processing portion of the graphics computer generates the pixels, it will extract from a frame buffer information about the pixels which will indicate that pixels 104 and 108 are to be rendered in the color of the triangle, that being the color associated with the pixel and that pixels 102 and 106 are to be rendered in a background color, i.e. not the color of the triangle. It can therefore be seen that there will be an artifact along the edge 112. This edge 112 is typically referred as the silhouette edge.

With reference to FIGURE 1b, there is illustrated the concept of supersampling. Each pixel 102, 104, 106 and 108 is divided into subpixels. For example, pixel 102 is now divided into pixel 102A, 102b, 102c and 102d. In the

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illustration of FIGURE 1b, the TLC of each of the pixels 102a, 102b, 102c and 102d is outside of the triangle 110 and the edge 112. Therefore, all of these pixels would be associated with a background color. However, it can be seen that pixel 106, divided into subpixels 106a, 106b, 106c and 106d, is oriented such that only the TLC of subpixel 106a is outside of the triangle 110. Subpixels 106b, 106c and 106d all have their associated TLC within the triangle 110, therefore rendering these subpixels in the color of the triangle. With supersampling, these values for all the subpixels are stored in the frame buffer for each pixel. Each pixel would therefore have stored subsamples associated therewith in the frame buffer and, when the video processing portion of the graphics computer renders a given pixel, it being understood that only a single pixel can be turned on in the display output, these values for the subsamples must be utilized to generate the final value of the pixel. For example, in pixel 106, there would only be one value for the pixel generated for display but it would be the average between all four subpixels and their stored subsample values. In this example, 75% of the samples are indicated as being the color of the triangle 110 whereas one of the samples was indicated as being the color of the background. Therefore, the video processing section would average the color values for pixels 104 - 75% of the triangle 110 color with 25% of the background color - and blend these colors together in that proportion to yield a final color. However, it is required that the color values for all four subpixels be stored for each output pixel value, thus increasing the size of the frame buffer.

Referring now to FIGURE 2, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of a higher density subpixel operation. This illustrates a pixel 202 which is expanded into 16 subpixels 204. An edge 206 of a triangle is illustrated as being disposed such that only three of the bottom right pixels in the 16 subpixel array are turned on. It can be seen that this would somewhat reduce the jaggie due to the TLC (reference numeral 210) of the pixel 202 being outside of the edge 206, it being understood that the triangle lies to the right of the edge 206. This pixel 202 would normally be off without any antialiasing and would also be off with 2x2 subsampling. With 4x4

subsampling, three out of 16 pixels would be turned on and therefore, 3/16 of the color of the triangle would be blended with 13/16th of the background color, thus reducing the jaggie effect over the 2x2 super sampling technique.

Referring now to FIGURE 4, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the graphics computer associated with the present disclosure. A conventional internal bus 302 is provided which interfaces with a graphical processor 304, a frame buffer 306 and a video interface 308. The video interface 308 interfaces with a video display unit 310. The resolution of the video display unit 310 and the way in which it is interfaced with the video interface 308 determines the resolution of the display. This is a predetermined resolution that can be defined by the user to the limit of the hardware. The graphical processor will typically receive through an I/O interface 312 information regarding the various polygons that are to be displayed on the video display 310. A graphical processor will then rasterize this information to determine what color a given pixel will be on the video display 310. Once these pixels are rasterized and stored, the video interface 308 merely needs to pull a pixel value up and then set that value to the appropriate color for the video display 310. However, the video interface 308 also performs the antialiasing function which will perform the various blend operation, depending upon the information that is contained within the frame buffer. If this were subsampling, the video interface 308 would blend the pixels that were the color of the triangle with those associated with the background color. Of course, until the video interface 308 pulls or fetches the pixel value that was rendered, it will not know what the background pixel of the adjacent area is. Therefore, in a conventional prior art operation, a neighboring pixel will need to be examined to determine what the blend operation will require. In the present disclosed embodiment, neighboring pixels are examined to determine blending also.

Referring now to FIGURE 4, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the technique of the present disclosure. A triangle 404 is provided having an edge 406 that passes through a grid of pixels, there being 16 pixels in a 4x4 grid, for

illustrative purposes only, it being understood that this represents a part of a much larger grid. In the grid 408, it can be seen that the edge 406 passes through six of the pixels contained therein, these being pixels 410. Of these pixels 410, three are completely within the triangle and seven pixels are only partially within the triangle
5 404 with the associated TLC contained fully within the triangle 404. Therefore, these seven edge pixels 410 having the associated TLC contained fully within the triangle 404 will be set to the color of the triangle 404, a conventional rasterization process. The remaining six pixels in the grid 408 will be in the background color. It can be seen that this results in a fairly jagged edge as an artifact of the image.

10 In association with each of the edge pixels, there is provided therefor a vector value, represented by an arrow 412. Each pixel will have associated therewith this vector which is stored in association with the pixel value, the vector having a direction and a magnitude. As will be described hereinbelow, the direction is positive or negative, i.e., pointed toward the triangle or away from the triangle, and
15 basically perpendicular to the edge. This is stored as either a 3-bit value or a 4-bit value representing either eight different directions or sixteen different directions. There is also stored with the vector 412 a "magnitude" for that vector which represents a supersampling value, as will be described in more detail hereinbelow. When the video interface 308 pulls any one of the pixels 410 associated with the
20 edge from the frame buffer 306, this pixel value can be "blended" with neighboring pixels in accordance with the information contained in the stored vector direction and magnitude.

Referring now to FIGURE 5, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view depicting the manner in which the value of the vector 412, the vector associated with
25 an edge pixel is related to the pixels through which the edge of the triangle passes. In FIGURE 5, there is illustrated a triangle 502 which is associated with a single edge pixel 504. The pixel 504 is illustrated as being at the top left corner of a 2x2 grid of pixels, there being a pixel 506 at the upper right hand corner, a pixel 508 at

the lower left hand corner and a pixel 510 at the lower right hand corner. Pixel 504, through which an edge 512 of a triangle 502 passes, constitutes the edge pixel. Since the TLC of pixel 504, represented by reference numeral 516, is within the triangle 502, the pixel 504 will be rendered at the color of the triangle 502, this being

5 represented by the title "Triangle" within pixel 504. The remaining pixels 506-510 will be rendered at the background color, indicated by the title "Background" within the respective pixels 506-510.

The pixel 504 is indicated as actually being disposed on the edge 512 of the triangle 502 such that only 10% of the pixel 504 is contained within the triangle 502.

10 The other 90% of the pixel 504 is disposed outside of the triangle 502. There is provided a vector 520 perpendicular to the edge 512 and oriented from the TLC 516 outward therefrom and perpendicular to the edge. In this example, it has an orientation of substantially 45 degrees to the right and down. The magnitude of the vector represents that only 10% of the pixel is within the triangle, as being the

15 magnitude of the vector 520.

The direction of the arrow 520 indicates that, since the edge pixel is the color of the triangle and the sum of the pixel on the edge pixel 504 is disposed outside of the triangle, there must be a blending operation with an adjacent background pixel, i.e, it will bring the color of the background into the rendered pixel before output, in

20 a blending operation. As will be described hereinbelow, the direction of the vector 520 indicates which adjacent background pixel is to be selected. In the example of FIGURE 5, all three adjacent neighboring pixels 506, 508 and 510 are in the background color. However, there may be situations that will be described hereinbelow, that will necessitate a different operation as to which adjacent pixels are

25 blended into or with the edge pixel.

During the blend operation, the color of the pixel 504 will be blended with the next adjacent background pixel in the direction of the vector 520 (for this

example), which in this example, would be background pixel 510. It will be blended such that 10% of the resulting color of the pixel 504, i.e., the triangle color, will be blended with 90% of the background color 510. If, for example, the pixel 504 had a full green value of 256 and the background pixel 510 had a yellow color of 256, the yellow value of the resulting pixel 504 would be set at 90% of the yellow value and 10% of the green value to provide the resulting color. However, it should be understood that any blending percentage could be applied, once the percentages of the edge triangle within the triangle (or polygon) are know, and this disclosed example should not be limiting.

Referring now to FIGURE 6, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the manner in which the magnitude of the vector, in one embodiment, is calculated. A pixel 602 is illustrated having a TLC 604. An edge of a triangle 606 is illustrated, which associated triangle contains the TLC 604. Therefore, the pixel 602 will be initially stored or rendered in the frame buffer in the color of the triangle. A distance measurement is provided between the TLC 604 and the edge 606, which distance measurement represents the percentage that is in the space of the TLC 604, where the percentage outside this space can be calculated therefrom. A vector 608 is provided which is oriented away from the triangle, since this indicates that blending must be with neighboring pixel to that of pixel 602, due to the fact that the pixel 602 is rendered in the color of the triangle. (In this example, the TLC 604 is inside the triangle.) This vector 608 has a direction that is in line with the perpendicular to the edge 606, and in line with the TLC 604 or parallel thereto. To determine which neighboring pixel is to be selected, the direct line from the TLC 604 along the direction of the vector 608 will be taken to the first neighboring pixel. However, it should be understood that many different algorithms could be utilized for blending of neighboring pixels, as will be described hereinbelow.

Referring now to FIGURE 7, there is illustrated an alternate embodiment of the embodiment of FIGURE 6. In FIGURE 7, there is illustrated a pixel 702 having

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a TLC 704. The TLC 704 is disposed outside of a triangle 706 having an edge 708 that passes through pixel 702. Therefore, there will be a vector 710 associated with the pixel 702 that is directed toward the edge, indicating that the pixel color 702 is that of the background and not of the triangle 706 and that the blending should be from the background to the triangle. The magnitude of the blending operation or the vector 710 is, again, the distance value of the edge 708 from the TLC 704. Although the pixel color is that of the background, the distance represents the portion of the pixel that lies in the background space and also in the direction indicates that it should be blended from the triangle to the background color, the background color being the color of the pixel 702.

Referring now to FIGURE 8, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the supersampling operation that is utilized to determine the distance. However, it should be understood that many different techniques could be utilized for determining the percentage of the pixel 602 that lies within the triangle or lies outside of the triangle. In the embodiment of FIGURE 8, there is illustrated a triangle 802 and a 4x4 grid 804, this grid 804 representing a single pixel, there being a plurality of subpixels 806. The subpixels 806 each have a TLC 808 that constitutes a sampling point to determine if the subpixel lies within the triangle or outside of the triangle. The triangle 802 has an edge 810 that passes through the pixel 804 which intersects a plurality of the subpixels 806. Each of the number of subpixels 806 that are turned on represents the distance value. Also, the particular pixels that are turned on represent the direction. For example, if only the four pixels in the top row were turned on, the direction would be downward and if only four pixels in one column were turned on, the direction would be to the right.

Referring now to FIGURE 9, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of various directions that are associated with the vector, this being determined from the supersample grid 804. If the edge 810 of the triangle 802 is disposed at a 45 degree angle, as illustrated in FIGURE 8, then the pixel will have a direction 902 at -45

degrees. This is merely represented as the bottom right corner pixel being the background color and the one adjacent to the left and to the top. There could, however, required another direction value between the vector 902 and the vector on the horizontal point to the right, a vector 904 at -22.5 degrees. If an additional vector is required, then additional degrees of freedom will be required for the vector direction. The illustrated diagram of FIGURE 9 requires only eight values, requiring a 3-bit value to be stored. However, sixteen values could be provided with a 4-bit stored word. This higher degree of resolution could be provided for the direction of the vector by utilizing more subsamples in the array for each edge pixel 804. Of course, the primary purpose for the direction of the vector, i.e. representing the orientation of edge, is to determine the direction of the neighboring pixel edge to be utilized for the blending operation.

Referring now to FIGURE 10, there is illustrated a flow chart depicting the rendering operation for generating the pixel edge to be stored in the frame buffer. The program is initiated at a block 1002 and then proceeds to a function block 1004. Function block 1004 indicates the operation wherein triangle information is received. This is the polygon information that is retrieved from data input file. The program then flows to a function block 1006 to rasterize this information, i.e., it takes all the information and determines the vertices of the edges of all of the pixels to be rendered and their position with respect to all the polygon information. This will allow a determination to be made as to whether the TLC of a pixel to be rendered lies within a polygon such that the color of the polygon can be associated therewith or outside of the polygon, such that it will be a background pixel. This is a conventional process. The program then flows to a decision block 1008 to determine if the pixel is an edge pixel. If not, the program flows along an "N" path to a function block 1010 to store the color and then to End block 1012.

If the pixel is an edge pixel, the program will flow along a "Y" path to a decision block 1014 to determine if the TLC of that edge pixel is within the triangle.

If so, this indicates that the pixel should be initially rendered in the color of the triangle and then the program flows along the “Y” path to a function block 1016 to set the pixel color to that of the triangle. The program then flows to a function 1018 to set the direction of the vector away from the edge, i.e., away from the TLC. It is
5 noted that the use of the TLC as the center point will result in the fact that the direction vector cannot be directed outward from the edge for angles between 90 to 180 degrees. After setting direction, the program flows to a function block 1020 to perform a supersample operation.

If the TLC is determined in the decision block 1014 not to be within the
10 triangle, the program will flow along the “N” path to a function block 1022 in order to set the pixel to the color of the background, i.e., indicating that it is not the color of the triangle. The program will then flow to a function block 1024 to set the direction toward the edge of the triangle and the TLC associated with the pixel. Again, the direction toward the triangle will not occupy the directions from 90
15 degrees to 180 degrees. The program then flows to the supersample function block 1020. At the function block 1020, the supersample operation is performed on the given pixel divided into a plurality of supersamples, there being sixteen in the disclosed embodiment with a 4x4 grid. However, it should be understood that any number of samples could be utilized and, in fact, the sampling need not be performed
20 in a grid manner, although a discrete sampling operation is preferred in digital applications. This supersampling operation allows determination of the number of samples that exist within the triangle, as indicated by a function block 1026. The program then flows to function block 1028 to calculate the fill value for the pixels that are determined to be within the triangle, (it being understood that it is the TLC
25 or sampling point of the subpixels that determines whether it is within the triangle or not). The number of samples determined is that within the TLC space. If the TLC exists in the triangle, then it is the percentage of the pixel within the triangle. However, if the TLC exists outside the triangle, then it is the percentage of the pixel that lies outside of the triangle. This fill value is then utilized as the magnitude of the

vector. The program then flows to a function block 1030 to store the pixel color that determines the rasterizing step, the vector direction and the magnitude of the vector, i.e. the fill percentage. The program then flows to the End block 1012.

Referring now to FIGURE 11, there is illustrated a flow chart depicting the video processing operation wherein the pixel information in the frame buffer is extracted therefrom and utilized to generate the actual output pixel value. As noted hereinabove, there can only be a single color value for that pixel output. Typically, the pixel device will allow an 8-bit value to be output for the pixel providing for a range of "0" to "256" values of a given color. Additionally, most displays do require multiple color planes to be output, typically a Red, a Green and a Yellow component. Therefore, there will be three 8-bit values for each pixel driven by the video processing operation in that situation.

The flow chart is initiated at a block 1102 and then proceeds to a function block 1104 to fetch the pixel values from the frame buffer, these representing those stored in the form of the rasterized pixel color, the vector direction and the magnitude. It should be understood that this frame buffer only requires the 8-bit color associated with each color level (not subsamples) of the pixel in addition to only a 4-bit magnitude value and a 3-bit or 4-bit value for the direction. Once this information is fetched, the program will flow to a decision block 1106 to determine if this is an edge pixel. This is facilitated by determining if there is any value other than zero in the vector direction or the magnitude. If not, the program will flow along a "N" path to an End block 1107. If, however, the pixel is an edge pixel, the program will flow to a decision block 1108 along a "Y" path to determine if the pixel is within the triangle, i.e., this is determined from the direction information. If not, the program will flow along the "N" path to a function block 1110 to fetch information from a neighboring triangle pixel in the vector direction. The program will then flow to a function block 1112 in order to blend the background information with the neighboring pixel, i.e., the triangle color, as described hereinabove. The

program then flows to an End block 1108. If it is determined that the edge pixel has the TLC disposed within the triangle, i.e., the direction of the vector outward from the triangle, then this would indicate that the color is to be blended with the neighboring background pixel, i.e., color from the neighboring background pixel was to be pulled into the given pixel. The program will flow along the "Y" path to a function block 1114 from the decision block 1108 to fetch this color information from the neighboring background pixel. The program then flows to the function block 1112 and then to the End block 1107.

Referring now to FIGURE 12, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the blending operation. A triangle 1202 is provided with an edge 1204. The color of the triangle is green. There is provided a grid of four pixels, an upper left pixel 1206, an upper right pixel 1208, a lower left pixel 1210 and a lower right pixel 1214 in a 2x2 grid. The pixel 1206 has a TLC 1216 that is disposed within the triangle 1202. Therefore, this pixel will be rasterized as a green pixel. The pixel 1206 has a vector 1218 associated therewith that is at a direction oriented outward from the edge 1204 of the triangle 1202 and the body of the triangle 1202. The edge 1204 is oriented at a 45 degree angle, for this example. Therefore, it is directed toward the pixel 1214. This is indicated as being a red pixel. The pixels 1208 and 1210 are illustrated as being black pixels.

In one embodiment of the blending operation, the primary pixel that the vector 1218 is directed toward is the pixel that is blended with the color of the pixel 1206. This would therefore result in the pixel 1206 being blended with pixel 1214 in the proportionate ratios of the amount of the pixel 1206 that is within the triangle and the amount that is outside of the triangle. However, when two adjacent pixels are different colors such as pixels 1208 and 1210, this may cause a problem. Therefore, many algorithms could be utilized, for example, if the angle is 45 degrees, 50% of the outside blend could be from the pixel 1214 and 25% from pixel 1210 and 25% from pixel 1208. For example, if 80% of the pixel 1206 were outside of the triangle,

then 80% of the blend would be from the neighboring pixels. In this example, 50% of the 80%, 40%, would be obtained from the red pixel 1214, 25% of the 80%, 20%, obtained from the pixel 1208 and the same amount from pixel 1210. This, of course, would require more processing on the part of the video processor in terms of obtaining this information.

Referring now to FIGURE 13, there is illustrated an alternate embodiment wherein more than just adjacent pixels are utilized for the blend operation. In FIGURE 13 there is illustrated a grid 1302 of sixteen pixels in a 4x4 array, this being part of the entire grid array. This array 1302 has an edge 1304 of a triangle 1306 passing therethrough. There are a number of edge pixels, one being a pixel 1308 having a TLC 1310 associated therewith and disposed within the triangle 1306. The pixel 1308 has a vector 1312 associated therewith that is oriented outward from the triangle, at a 45 degree angle in this example. In this example, there will be a diametrically opposite pixel 1314, similar to the pixel 1214 in FIGURE 12. This is the immediately adjacent pixel to which the vector 1312 is pointing. However, the closest neighbors to pixel 1314 that are closest to pixel 1308 adjacent thereto are pixels 1316 and 1318. These are similar to pixels 1208 and 1210 in FIGURE 12. However, adjacent thereto and disposed away from edge 1316 in pixel 1308 are other pixels in the array 1302. These are more distantly removed and may be utilized in the blend operation such that a much smaller percentage of their color is "blended" into pixel 1308. In accordance with the percentages of pixel 1308 lying within the triangle and outside of the triangle. Again, any type of algorithm could be utilized.

Referring now to FIGURE 14, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the frame buffer layout for the disclosed embodiment. There is provided for each pixel a field for the pixel color, this being an 8-bit field for a given plane or, there could be required multiple planes of color. There is also provided a direction field for the direction of the vector and a fill or magnitude field. The pixel color would be an 8-bit value for each plane (not a subsample), with the direction being a 3-bit or a 4-bit

value and the filler magnitude value being typically a 4-bit value. There could also be additional information associated with each of the pixels associated with texture, transparency, and the such. However, it is noted that there are no subsamples associated with the pixels stored in the frame buffer. This significantly reduces the amount of memory required for pixel such that only this information is required for the antialiasing operation.

Referring now to FIGURE 15, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view for an alternate embodiment for generating an antialiasing mask. As described hereinabove, the concept of the vector and direction information for the antialiasing operation requires the storage of eight bits to perform the antialiasing operation during the filtering stage on any given pixel. However, this requires the filtering operation to extract the vector, which is a compressed form of the subpixel information or coverage, and then "expand" it to obtain the convolution kernel. For small triangles, this may result in the loss of information.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIGURE 15, a mask is generated, comprised of sixteen bits, each bit associated with one of the sixteen subpixels (for a 4x4 array) that are derived during the sampling operation. In this embodiment, there is provided a subpixel mask 1502 for a given pixel 1504. The mask is comprised of sixteen pixels, such that the pixel 1504 is divided up into a 4x4 array. This pixel 1504 is a pixel that is disposed on an edge 1506 of a triangle 1508. When, during the scan operation of the line for the polygon, it is determined that the pixel 1504 is an "edge" pixel, then an antialiasing mask is generated. The purpose, as will be described hereinbelow, is to determine how many of the subpixels fall within the triangle 1508 and how many fall outside of the triangle 1508. The submask 1502 illustrates the sampling points, which are at the center of each of the subpixels in the subpixel mask 1502. This generates a series of values, a "1" when the centerpoint of the subpixel is within the triangle and a "0" when a subpixel is outside of the triangle.

In the example of FIGURE 15, it can be seen that there are three subpixels in the upper left corner of the pixel 1504 that are disposed within the triangle 1508. This results in a value of "1" being disposed therein. This is converted to values, as illustrated diagrammatically in an array 1510, which results in the mask value of

5 "1100100000000000."

It can therefore be seen that providing a sixteen bit word wherein each of the bits represents the presence of the associated subpixel within the triangle or outside of the triangle for an edge pixel, that a calculation can be made as to the percentage of pixels that are disposed within the triangle. Thereafter, some type of "blending" operation can be performed during a filtering step wherein the particular pixel that constitutes an edge pixel has the color thereof determined as a ratio of a percentage of the subpixels within the triangle to those outside of the triangle, the blending being between the color of the triangle and the color of the background and also of adjacent pixels, this having been described hereinbelow. This will typically require some type of convolution operation, which will be associated with the color of the triangle within which any portion thereof is disposed.

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Referring now to FIGURE 16, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of an edge pixel 1602 illustrating a plurality of subpixels 1604 disposed therein. A triangle 1606 is provided with an edge 1608 running through the pixel 1602. In this illustration, the edge 1608 runs through the pixel 1602 such that one half of the subpixels 1604 have the center sampling point thereof disposed outside of the triangle 1606 and the remaining half, or eight subpixels, have the center sampling point thereof disposed with the triangle 1606. Please note that, while this embodiment utilizes these "centers" of the subpixels as the sampling points, it should be understood that the sampling point can be anywhere within the pixel, at one of the corners, the edge, or any position therein.

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Since the pixel in FIGURE 16 is so disposed on the edge of the triangle 1606, this will result in the bit value for each of the eight subpixels 1604 outside of the triangle 1606 to be set to a "0." The remaining eight subpixels within the triangle 1606 have the value of the subpixels associated therewith set to a "1." The resulting antialiasing mask value will be a sixteen bit value as follows: "0000000011111111."

Referring now to FIGURE 17, there is illustrated an alternate embodiment depicting a very thin triangle 1702 that extends through a pixel 1704 comprised of a plurality of subpixels 1706. The triangle 1702 is disposed such that an edge 1706 and an edge 1708 pass through the pixel 1704 such that only four subpixels are associated therewith, i.e., the sampling point falls within the triangle 1702. This would result in the antialiasing mask having a value of "0000111100000000."

FIGURE 18 illustrates an alternate embodiment wherein a triangle 1802 passes through a pixel 1704 with an edge 1804 and an edge 1806 running therethrough but not enclosing any of the centerpoints, sampling points, of any of the subpixels 1706. This will result in a submask value of "0000000000000000."

Referring now to FIGURE 19, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the manner in which the buffers are oriented. There are provided multiple buffers for storing information. There is provided a Z-buffer 1902 for storing the Z-values relating to the depth of the pixel. As is well known in the art, this allows any pixel to have depth information associated therewith such that, during rendering, a triangle having a scan line that is at a lower depth, i.e. nearer the surface, will override the deeper pixel and will provide a replacement therefore. There is provided an antialiasing buffer 1904 for storing the sixteen bit mask and the sixteen bit secondary Z-value indicating depth information for the mask, which secondary Z-value will be described in more detail hereinbelow. In addition, there is provided a back buffer 1906 for storing pixel data during the rendering process for determining the frame information. A front buffer 1908 comprises the information from the previous

rendering operation which represents information that is actually displayed. When the rendering operation is complete, the information in the back buffer 1906 is then stored in the front buffer 1908 after filtering with the antialiasing information in the antialiasing buffer 1904.

5 Referring now to FIGURE 20, there is illustrated a block diagram of the overall 3D engine. The core of the 3D engine is a rendering engine 2002, which is operable to receive video input data on a video input line 2004 which flows through a memory interface 2006 to the rendering engine 2002. The rendering engine 2002 is operable to receive the video input data in the form of various parameters, which
10 parameters are to be converted into video data for output on a video output line 2008. This is a relatively conventional operation for rendering the pixels. The memory interface 2006 is also interfaced with two memories, a DRAM 2010 and an SRAM 2012. The DRAM 2010 is utilized for storing the back buffer 1906, the Z-buffer 1902 and the antialiasing buffer 1904. The SDRAM 2012 is utilized for storing the
15 front buffer 1908. Therefore, once the back buffer 1906 is created, it will be converted to a front buffer and transferred from the DRAM 2012 to the SDRAM 2012. During the filtering operation, the rendering engine 2002 is utilized in the filtering operation to operate on the SDRAM 2012 in conjunction with the information in the antialiasing buffer 1904 in the DRAM 2010. It is noted that,
20 however, during the filtering operation, only the antialiasing mask is required for the filtering operation.

Referring now to FIGURE 21, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of a pixel 2102 that is illustrated with a plurality of subpixels 2104 therein. The pixel 2102 has disposed therein a small triangle 2106 which is indicated as being a red
25 color. Therefore, there will be provided a 24 bit color value for this pixel 2106 disposed in the color buffer or back buffer. This is due to the fact that the triangle is within the pixel 2102 and, further, that the sampling point for the pixel is the top left

corner "TLC" of the pixel 2102, indicated by an "X." Therefore, the color of the pixel 2102 will be the color of the polygon that occupies the TLC of the main pixel.

The triangle 2106 is disposed such that it only encloses three subpixels 2104 of the main pixel 2102. This particular triangle 2106 has associated therewith a depth value or a Z-value. During the rendering process, the pixel 2402 initially has a Z-value of infinity, due to the background being black. This is represented by the primary Z value Z_p , which is a 32-bit value. Essentially, this is represented by all the bits being in a logical "1." After rendering, the depth value or the Z-value of the pixel 2102 will change, depending upon what polygon, a triangle in the present embodiment, has the center sampling point of the pixel 2102 enclosed therein. Therefore, the primary depth information, Z_p , of the pixel 2102 will change to Z-value of the polygon. Additionally, during the rendering process, the number of subpixels that have the sampling point thereof disposed within the triangle 2406 will be determined so as to generate the antialiasing mask. This mask is indicated as being the value "0000011000100000." A further measurement provided is a secondary Z-value, Z_s . This indicates the depth of the mask, which is determined from the triangle associated with that mask. For example, if the sampling point or center point of the overall main pixel 2102 were enclosed within the triangle, the color of the pixel 2102 would be the same as the triangle and the depth of the mask would be that of the triangle. It is noted that this Z_s value is a 16-bit value, i.e., it is truncated from the 32-bit value associated with the triangle. This allows a 16-bit value to be stored in association with the 16-bit mask to provide a 32-bit overall antialiasing word. In another example, the pixel 2102 could be an edge pixel wherein the sampling point is outside of the triangle, such that the color of the pixel 2102 would be the color of the background but the depth of the mask would be that of the triangle.

The purpose for the Z_s value is to ensure that there is only one mask value for each pixel, that being the mask value associated with the triangle that is nearest to the

display. If, during rendering, it were determined that another triangle occupied all or a portion of the pixel 2402, the antialiasing mask for the pixel 2402 would be that associated with the one of the triangles which occupies at least one subpixel and that is nearest to the foreground, even if the center sampling point of the overall main pixel 2402 is outside of the nearest triangle.

Referring now to FIGURE 22, there is illustrated an example of a deeper triangle that occupies a portion of the main pixel 2402. In this example, there is provided a triangle that is blue in color, the triangle 2406 being red in color and the background back in color, which larger triangle has an edge 2202 with the interior of the triangle indicated by arrows extending away therefrom. The larger triangle associated with the edge 2402 is disposed such that the pixel 2102 is an edge pixel, i.e., only a portion of the subpixels 2104 disposed within the larger triangle, the blue triangle. However, the main Z-value for the large triangle is larger than that of the small triangle 2106, i.e., it is further away from the foreground. If the Z-value for the red triangle 2106 were 100 and the Z-value for the large blue triangle were 200, then it would indicate that the triangle 2106 were in the foreground. Therefore, when determining the main Z-value for the pixel 2102, the Z_p value, it is necessary to determine which polygon the sampling point, the "X" point, is disposed in. In this example of FIGURE 22, the sampling point is disposed within the blue triangle. Therefore, the Z-value for the pixel 2102 will be set to the color of the blue triangle and that leaves the decision as to what the antialiasing mask value should be. To determine this, the depth value for the blue triangle is compared to that of the Z_s value and the antialiasing buffer. If it is determined that the red triangle 2106 has a smaller Z value, associated with the Z_s value, then the mask will remain unchanged. However, if the blue triangle is nearer to the foreground, then the mask will be overwritten with the value correlating to the number of pixels having the sampling point thereof disposed within the blue triangle. This Z_s value is therefore utilized to resolve a coverage mask ordering problem for pixels that are partially covered. Although the pixel 2102 is illustrated as having the sampling point thereof disposed

within the blue triangle, it could be that the blue triangle in fact partially covered the pixel 2102 but did not include the sampling point. Even in this situation, the Z_p of the pixel 2102 would be that of the background for some other color and would remain so. However, the mask value would be determined as that of the nearest triangle or polygon containing at least one subpixel (noting that a rule may be provided that more than one subpixel would be required for the triangle to have priority. Although the Z_s value is only a 16-bit value resulting in some loss of resolution in the decision process as to priority, this is a small tradeoff for the benefits provided as to mask ordering. Therefore, in the filtering or blending step, the color of the main pixel would be blended into neighboring pixels, depending upon the color values thereof and the mask values thereof. The values indicated for the mask indicate that the mask value has not changed, but that the Z_p -value has changed to the depth of the blue triangle, whereas the mask depth remains as that of the depth of the red triangle, i.e., the Z_s has not changed from one to the other, nor has the mask value changed, due to the fact that the triangle 2106 is nearer to the surface than the blue triangle.

Referring to FIGURE 23, there is illustrated a flow chart depicting the operation of determining the mask overwrite (or non overwrite) during the rendering process. This operation is initiated at a start block 2302 and then proceeds to a block 2304 wherein a line will be scanned, this being the line 2202. As the line is scanned through the pixel 2102, that being the line 2202, a decision is made as to whether an antialiasing mask is present, as indicated by a decision block 2306. If one is already present, the program will flow along a "Y" path to compare the Z_p for the triangle associated with the current line-triangle with the existing antialiasing mask. The program will then flow to a decision block 2310 to determine if the Z_s value is greater than the Z_p value. If so, then the program will flow along the "Y" path to keep the current mask and then flow to a block 2314 to the rendering operation. However, if it was determined that the Z_p for the polygon associated with the line being scanned were greater than the existing mask value in the antialiasing buffer

and then the program will flow along the "N" path to a function block 2316 to render a new antialiasing mask, that associated with the percentage of subpixels 2104 that are enclosed by the new polygon, and then set the value of $Z_s = Z_p$ for that current polygon, it being noted that this is a truncation operation wherein the original 32-bit value for Z_p for the current triangle being scanned is truncated down to 16-bits and stored in the antialiasing buffer. The program will then flow to the block 2314 for completion of the rendering process. The completion of the rendering process determines the overall Z-value for the pixel and the color therefore and stores them in the appropriate places.

If, at the decision block 2306, it were determined that no antialiasing mask were present, the program would flow along the "N" path to determine if this were an edge pixel. The edge pixel at a decision block 2318. If it were an edge pixel, the program would flow along the "Y" path to the function block 2316 to render a new mask and set the value equal to that of the truncated value. If this were determined not to be an edge pixel, the program will flow along the "N" path to the function block 2314. This would be a default operation wherein the mask would, of course, have all of the pixels and subpixels set to a "1" and the value set equal to the truncated value.

Referring now to FIGURE 24, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of one storage region in the antialiasing mask buffer. This is comprised of two fields, one for the mask, a 16-bit field in this embodiment, and one for the 16-bit value. In another embodiment described hereinbelow, the mask is a 12-bit value.

Referring now to FIGURE 25, there is illustrated a flow chart depicting a filtering operation. The operation is initiated at a block 2502 and then proceeds to a function block 2504 wherein the rendering operation is performed utilizing the back buffer, the Z buffer and the antialiasing buffer. As lines are scanned, the back buffer is filled in with the color value for the designated pixel, i.e., the pixel being rendered,

the Z value for the rendered pixel is determined, that being Z value for the polygon that within which the sampling point of the rendered pixel resides and, if a determination is made that it is an edge pixel, then the mask value is determined. This is indicated by a function block 2506 wherein the antialiasing buffer, the back buffer and the Z buffer are filled. After completion of the rendering operation, then the back buffer must be transferred to the front buffer. In this operation, as indicated by function block 2508, the filtering operation performs a convolution operation wherein a 3x3 convolution kernel is utilized. This is comprised of a 3x3 array of pixels with a center pixel being the current pixel evaluated. By utilizing the antialiasing mask, and not the Z_s-value, the standard convolution process can be utilized to "blend" the current pixel with its neighboring pixels.

Referring now to FIGURE 26, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of the filtering operation. There is illustrated the 3-D rendering engine core by reference numeral 2602. The 3-D core 2602 is operable to interface with a back buffer 2604 during the rendering operation to create the rasterized pixel. As described hereinabove, each pixel will have associated therewith a depth value and a color value, this color value comprised of the Red, Blue and Green color values. In addition to information in the back buffer 2604, there will also be provided an antialiasing (AA) buffer 2602 which is created during the rendering process. As described hereinabove, this AA buffer 2602 contains the antialiasing (AA) mask and also the secondary Z value, this secondary Z value representing the depth of the antialiasing mask for pixels that are partially covered by a polygon or triangle in the disclosed embodiment, but are not considered inside the triangle, i.e., the sampling point is outside of the triangle. There is also provided a main Z-buffer 2606 which stores the Z values for the primary pixels.

The following sequence of instructions illustrates the operation:

```
// mask = 12bit subpixel mask of incoming pixel  
// inside = The center of this pixel is inside the triangle
```

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```

// flatcase = Triangle considered a 2D overlay; combine fragments to avoid holes in
// overlay
// enableflatcase = driver can disable flatcase
int writepixel(int x,int y,int mask, int c,float z,int inside)
5  {
    if zcompare(z,primaryZ) return(0);
    // Normal color and z write
    if (inside)
    {
10        do_standard_color&Z_write(c,z);
        mask=not mask;    // invert mask
    }
    // NOTE: if incoming mask WAS full, it is here
    // empty because full mask is always inside !!!!
15    // If pixel is inside, the mask was inverted above.
    // The remaining code is needed to run only if
    // antialiasing is on
    // Read AA buffer if antialiasing is on
    if (antialiasing on)
20        AA=read from AA buffer;
    else
        AA=empty;
    if (mask is empty)
    {
25        if ( zcompare(z,AA.secondaryZ) passes and (c.alpha>treshold) )
        {
            AA.mask=0;
            AA.secondaryZ=z;
        }
30    } else
    {
        if (flatcase and enableflatcase) // Driver may force the flatcase off
        {
35            // Check if old and new masks cover the pixel 100%
            if ((AA.mask xor mask) is empty)
            {
                AA.mask=0;
                AA.secondaryZ=z;
            } else // If not, force new mask to buffer
40            {
                AA.mask=mask;
                AA.secondaryZ=z;
            }
        } else
45        if (mask has more "1" bits than AA.mask)

```

```

    {
        AA.mask=mask;
        AA.secondaryZ=z;
    }
5      }

    // If antialiasing is on, write possibly modified
    // mask and secondary Z back to AA buffer
    if (antialiasing on)
    {
10        write AA.mask to AAbuffer;
        if (secondaryzwrite enabled) write AA.secondaryZ to AAbuffer
    }

}

```

15 During the filtering operation and the building of a front buffer 2608, the primary pixel information in the back buffer 2604 and the antialiasing information in the AA buffer 2602 are utilized. This information is processed through a filtering block 2610, which block 2610 represents a process. The depth information in the Z-buffer 2606 is primarily used during the rendering process to determine which pixel

20 is in the foreground.

 Referring now to FIGURE 27, there is illustrated a view of an edge pixel 2702 representing the subpixel mask, the subpixel mask is comprised of 16 subpixels 2704 arranged in a 4x4 array. A triangle 2706 is provided with an edge 2708 passing through the primary pixel 2702. There is provided a sampling point 2710 in the

25 center of the primary pixel 2702. This sampling point, as described hereinabove, represents the determining point for the primary color of the pixel, i.e., if the center point 2710 of the primary pixel 2702 is within the triangle 2706, then the color of the primary pixel 2702 is the color of the triangle 2706. When this occurs, the value of subpixels within the triangle are set to a value of "1," indicating that these are the

30 subpixels within the triangle associated with the color of the primary pixel 2702.

In the alternate condition wherein the center 2710 of the primary pixel 2702 lies outside of the triangle 2706, such that the line 2708 passes through a smaller number of subpixels 2704, this illustrated in FIGURE 28, the subpixels that lie within the triangle are set to a value of "0." The remaining subpixels 2704 are set to a value of "1." The value of "1" represents that these are the subpixels 2704 that are associated with space corresponding to the color of the primary pixel 2702. Initially, the sub-mask of subpixels 2704 is cleared to the value of "1" indicating that all of the subpixels are at the color of the primary pixel 2702, which is typically black, the primary background color. During rendering, select one of the subpixels 2704 are set to a value of "0" when determined that the sampling point thereof lies within a space of a different color. If the primary pixel lies mostly outside of the triangle (sampling point outside - center sampling point in this embodiment) and is the color of the background, the subpixels lying inside the triangle will have a "0" value and, if the primary pixel lies mostly inside of the triangle and is the color of the triangle, the subpixels lying outside of the triangle will have a "0" value. Initially, during the rendering process, the AA mask is created by setting the bit associated with the subpixels determined to lie within a triangle to a value of "1," regardless of how much of the primary pixel lies within the triangle. After creation of the AA mask, and before storage thereof in the AA mask, a determination is made as to whether the sampling point of the primary pixel is within the triangle or not. If outside of the triangle, then the bits in the AA mask are "flipped" and the color of the primary pixel set to the color of the space occupied by the sampling point of the primary pixel, the center thereof in this embodiment. As such, the value of "1" for a subpixel always indicates that it has a color associated with the color of the associated primary pixel. This will be utilized for the filtering process, as will be described hereinbelow.

Referring now to FIGURE 29, there is illustrated a simplified schematic of the color blending operation or filtering operation for one adjacent pixel to a center pixel 2902. The center pixel 2902 is the pixel that is being processed during the filtering operation. In this process, it can be seen that the mask value for the pixel

2902 is "1000110011101110." There is provided a right adjacent pixel 2904 and a left adjacent pixel 2905 that are utilized in the filtering operation with color blended into the center pixel 2902 from the adjacent pixels 2904 and 2905. As will be described hereinbelow, other adjacent pixels may be utilized, but only two are discussed in this example. The weight of the final color of center pixel is set to the number of subpixels with a value of "1" multiplied by the color of pixel 2902 to provide a center result. When determining the weight of the adjacent pixels 2904 and 2905, the subpixels in primary pixel 2902 are evaluated that are in proximity thereto. In this example, the subpixel array is divided into two regions, a region 2906 comprised of the eight leftmost subpixels and a region 2907 associated with the eight rightmost subpixels. Region 2906 is used for blending the pixel 2905 and region 2907 is utilized for blending of the pixel 2904. In this example, the number of subpixels in the region 2906 having a "1" value are multiplied by the color of the pixel 2905 and a left result generated. Similarly, the number of subpixels in the region 2907 having a "1" value are multiplied by the color of the pixel 2904 and a right result generated. The right, left and center results are then added together and divided by 16 to provide a normalized result. As such, only a single value is required to determine how to blend color from adjacent pixels, due to the fact that the single value has not only percentage information associated therewith, but also directional information. This was also the case with the vector embodiment described hereinabove.

Referring now to FIGURE 30, there is illustrated another embodiment wherein sparse sampling is utilized. As described hereinabove, the AA mask is comprised of a 4x4 array. If all of the subpixels are represented in the final mask value, this would result in 16 bits. In this embodiment, there will be defined a 5x5 array that is sparse sampled, i.e., a sparse sampled subpixel grid. These samples will be distributed in a "checkerboard" fashion, providing 12 subpixels, requiring only a 12-bit word for the AA mask. Further, the subpixels are initially rasterized as 4x4 array and then, with an overlapping technique, mapped into a 5x5 array.

In FIGURE 30, there is illustrated a 9x9 rasterizer mask illustrated in a plurality of primary pixels 3002 in a 2x2 array, each comprised of 16 subpixels 3004. The 4x4 array of subpixels 3004 for each primary pixel 3002 are arranged in an 4x4 array, in a sparse sampled manner that resembles a checkerboard pattern. Therefore, the top left corner subpixel 3004 will be unsampled and the next adjacent pixel in the row will be sampled, the next one unsampled and the next one sampled. In the next row, the first subpixel 3004 will be sampled, the next unsampled, the next sampled and the last unsampled. This will continue in a checkerboard manner. In the next adjacent primary pixel 3002 to the right, the sampling is the same. The rasterizer mask of FIGURE 30 comprises four primary pixels 3002 in a 2x2 array with an adjacent column 3006 of subpixels included from the rightmost primary pixels 3002 and a row 3008 adjacent to the lowermost primary pixels 3002.

In the rendering process, it can be seen that the upper right primary pixel 3002 has the two leftmost sampled subpixels 3004 indicated as being covered by a polygon. The upper left primary pixel 3002 has no subpixels 3004 covered. The lower left primary pixel 3002 has the two sampled pixels in the first row covered, as does the lower right primary pixel 3002. The lower right primary pixel 3002 also has the two sampled pixels in the first column covered.

Referring now to FIGURE 31, there is illustrated the final 5x5 AA mask, which results from the 9x9 rasterizer mask, comprised of four primary pixels 3002 and associated 4x4 AA masks, being masked into a 10x10 final mask comprised of four primary pixels 3002' and associated 5x5 AA masks. In order to provide the last column of the AA mask for the upper left 3002', the first column of the primary pixel 3002 and associated AA mask is reproduced or copied, i.e., it is overlapping. Similarly, an additional row is provided for the AA mask of the upper left 3002' by copying the first row of the AA mask of the lower left primary pixel 3002 in FIGURE 30. This will be the same for the AA mask of the upper right pixel 3002',

wherein the first row of the AA mask of the lower right primary pixel 3002 is copied from the rasterizer mask of FIGURE 30. Also, an additional last column is provided for the AA mask of the lower left pixel 3002' by copying the first column of the AA mask of the primary pixel 3002. Therefore, the operation involves extending the
5 number of columns by one and the number of rows by one by copying the respective column and row of the AA masks of the two adjacent pixels on the right and bottom, respectively, in addition to copying the AA masks of the upper left pixel in the lower right corner subpixel of the AA mask of the primary pixel 3002. In practice, this means that, for a 2x2 pixel packet (primary pixels), the rasterizer can generate a 9x9
10 subpixel coverage mask and extract row/column samples from 0-to-4 for the first pixel coverage mask, and then samples from 4-to-8 for a second pixel coverage mask. The purpose of providing this overlapping sample is to provide some additional smoothness to the image. However, it should be understood that the initial subpixel ray could be a 5x5 array.

15 Referring now to FIGURE 32, there is illustrated a diagrammatic view of a 5 tap filter kernel. In this kernel, there is provided a middle pixel 3202, which middle pixel comprises the given pixel that is being filtered or antialiased. There is provided an upper pixel 3204 adjacent the upper edge of the pixel 3202, a right pixel 3206, adjacent the right edge of the pixel 3202, a down pixel 3208, adjacent the lower edge
20 of the pixel 3202 and a left pixel 3210 adjacent the left edge of the middle pixel 3202. Each of these pixels has associated therewith color information in the color buffer (in Back Buffer). For the blending or filtering operation, these are the five pixels that are considered. However, it should be understood that the filtering operation could be extended even further to pixels in the lower right hand corner, the
25 upper left hand corner, the upper right hand corner, and the lower left hand corner. This filtering operation could also extend to the right of pixels 3206, below pixel 3208, leftmost of pixel 3210 and uppermost of pixel 3204. This is merely a weighting operation, as will be described hereinbelow.

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Referring now to FIGURES 33a-33d, there are illustrated four diagrams illustrating how the filtering operation is to be carried out. FIGURE 33a illustrates the weighting mask associated with the up pixel 3204, FIGURE 33b illustrates the weighting mask utilized for the right pixel 3206, FIGURE 33c illustrates the weighting mask associated with the down pixel 3208 and FIGURE 33d illustrates the weighting mask associated with the left pixel 3210. Each of the weighting masks in FIGURES 33a-33d provides only three weighting sampled subpixels that are adjacent to the edge associated with the corresponding up, right, down or left pixels that will be considered during the blending operation. In FIGURE 33a, the weighting mask associated with the up pixel 3204 has the weighting sampled subpixels on the upper edge thereof indicated as being associated with the filtering operation; that is, only these subpixels will be used in the weighting operation. These are indicated as being weighting subpixels 3302, 3306 and 3304. Similarly, in the mask of FIGURE 33b, it is the three sub weighting pixels corresponding to pixels 3302-3304 on the right edge that will be used in the filtering operation to blend color from the right pixel 3206 into the middle pixel 3202. In FIGURE 33c, associated with the down pixel 3208, only the bottom three corresponding subpixels associated with the lower edge will be considered as weighting subpixels. In FIGURE 33d, associated with the left pixel 3210, only the three subpixels proximate to the left edge of the mask will be utilized as the weighting subpixels. In FIGURES 33a-33d, the subpixels considered as weighting subpixels are indicated in dark colors. It can be seen that the filtering operation is such that it only considers the values of the subpixels in the AA mask of the middle pixel 3202 that are proximate to the adjacent pixel as weighting subpixels for that adjacent subpixel in the filtering or blending operation. This recognizes that subpixels that are distal to that adjacent pixel will not be considered as weighting subpixels, such that the filtering operation can be directionally oriented.

Since there are four adjacent pixels that are considered in the filtering operation, the AA subpixel mask for the center pixel 3202 is divided by a factor of 4, resulting in three weighting pixels associated with each of the adjacent pixels.

color to the averaging operation would then be "0," as none of the bits are indicated as not being a "1" value. The remaining four values will have a value of 3 times the pixel color for a value of 4 for each of the up, right, down and left weighting values. This will be a total of 12 which, when divided by 12, will result in the value of "1."

5 This indicates that the pixel is the average of the four adjacent pixels.

Although the preferred embodiment has been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions and alterations can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

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